

# *Aging Gracefully:* The Science of Living Well

## A message from the CLSA research team

**W**elcome to the first issue of *Aging Gracefully*, the newsletter for participants of the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA). To date, more than 26,000 of you have already joined the study. Thank you!

Canada is experiencing a remarkable change in the make-up of its population, with people living longer than before.

By 2036, nearly one in four Canadians will be age 65 or older. Thus the CLSA has come at an important time allowing us to explore how differently we age and providing information on how we can best cope with the changes that come along with aging.

Over the next 20 years, the study will follow 50,000 Canadians, collecting detailed information on their physical, emotional and social health functioning. We anticipate that the information gained from the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging will lead to better programs, policies and services for our aging population.

This newsletter will give you an overview of the CLSA as it stands today. It includes a summary of what study participation entails, a snapshot of recruitment to date, information about CLSA events and details on how we can keep you informed about the latest study developments.

This inaugural issue of our newsletter focuses on nutrition. Statistics Canada recently released results from the 2008-09 Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) on healthy aging. The survey estimated that as many as 4.1 million older Canadians are at risk of malnutrition. In this newsletter, we provide some additional information from the Statistics Canada survey along with an interview with H el ene Payette, an expert in nutrition and aging and the lead CLSA researcher in Sherbrooke, Que.

We look forward to keeping you up to date as the CLSA progresses. Thank you again for your participation.



Left photo: H el ene Payette (left), lead CLSA researcher in Sherbrooke, and St ephane Choquette, Data Collection Site Coordinator, at the April 2012 launch of the Sherbrooke site; Centre photo: Lead CLSA researchers Susan Kirkland (left), Parminder Raina (centre) and Christina Wolfson (right) at the CLSA Grand Opening and Showcase in September 2012; Right photo: Verena Menec (right), lead CLSA researcher in Manitoba, leads a tour of the Winnipeg Data Collection Site for MP Joy Smith (left).

- Every three years participants take part in an hour-long in-home interview and a 2½ hour Data Collection Site visit or an hour-long telephone interview.
- Telephone interviews are conducted from one of four Computer-Assisted Telephone Interview (CATI) centres in Victoria, Halifax, Sherbrooke and Winnipeg.
- Data Collection Sites are located in 11 cities across Canada: Victoria, Vancouver, Surrey, Calgary, Winnipeg, Hamilton, Ottawa, Montreal, Sherbrooke, Halifax and St. John's.
- The in-home and telephone interviews include questions about physical, emotional and social health functioning.
- At the Data Collection Sites, participants have physical tests done including weight, vision, hearing, mobility, bone density, blood pressure and heart function.

## Q&A with Hélène Payette

Professor in the Department of Community Health Sciences at the Université de Sherbrooke



### How important is healthy eating as we age?

A healthy diet is as important during the last part of our life as it was at the very beginning. At both extremes of life, the body undergoes significant changes that require special attention to the quantity and the quality of food. For instance, we know now that the intake of protein from meat, fish or milk products should increase as a person ages in order to prevent weight loss and decrease in muscle mass.

### What can people do to ensure they maintain adequate nutrition as they age?

Eat a large variety of foods, with pleasure and in good company, and continue to be active in order to maintain a good appetite.

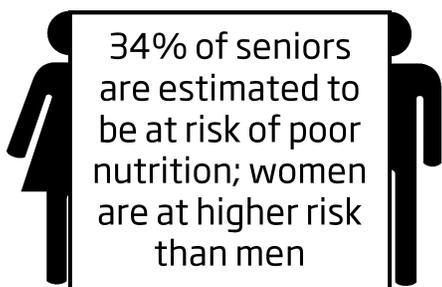
### What foods should I be choosing?

[Canada's Food Guide](#) recommends which foods and food groups should be consumed on a daily basis to get all the nutrients required to remain healthy, including in older ages. Having [a picture of Canada's Food Guide](#) on your fridge will help you choose your food for each meal. In addition, it now appears that proteins are particularly important as people age, so make sure to eat lean meat, eggs, legumes (e.g. beans, lentils) or dairy products at each meal.

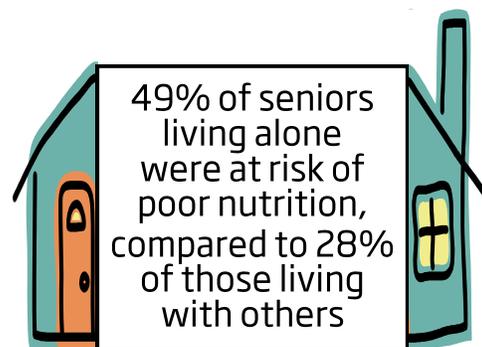
### What do you hope to learn about nutrition from the CLSA?

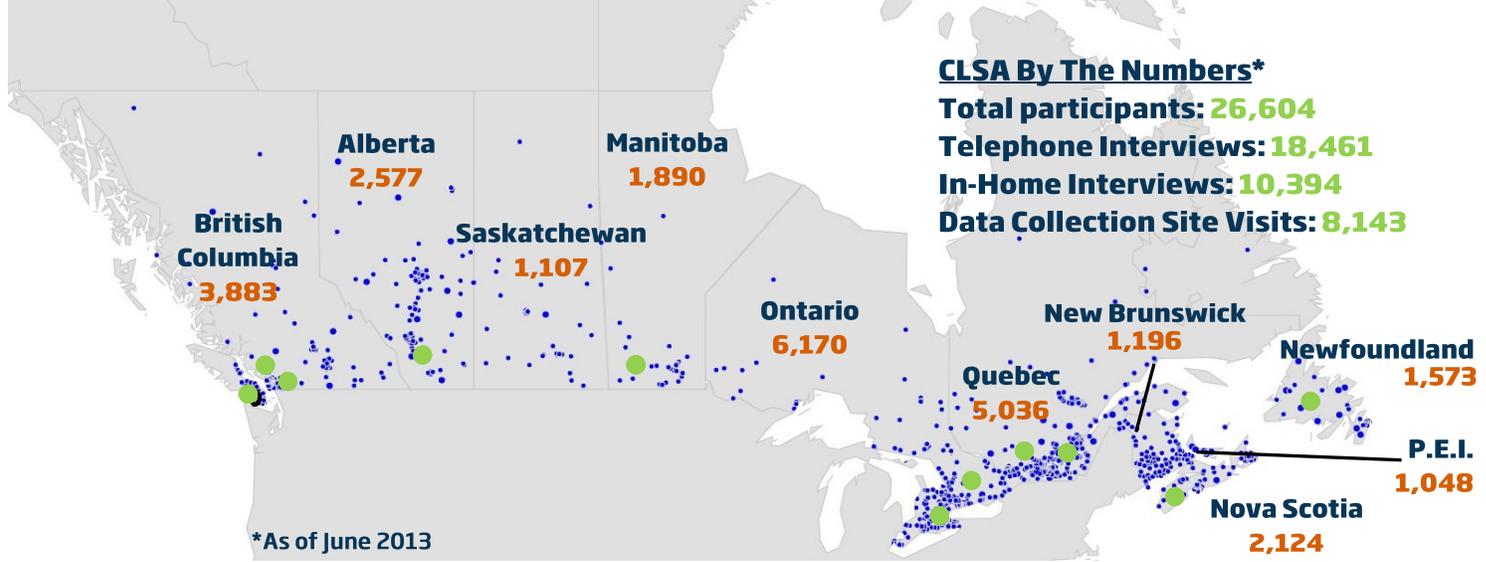
We hope to get a better understanding about which foods can promote physical and mental health, and optimal functioning as people age. Furthermore, information gathered will help us to clarify how we could help people to maintain a "healthy" diet in face of disease, reduced mobility, smell and taste alteration, sadness or isolation, as well as other social and environmental factors which could influence access to good food in sufficient quantity.

Statistics Canada conducts the [Canadian Community Health Survey—Healthy Aging](#), which focuses on the health of Canadians aged 45 and over. The [2008/09 results on nutrition among seniors](#) were recently released and the major findings include:



Risk factors for poor nutrition include weight change of 10 lbs in last 6 months and skipping meals





## Who are CLSA participants?

46% Men  
54% Women



- 27% are aged 45-54
- 33% are aged 55-64
- 23% are aged 65-74
- 17% are aged 75-85

### How you rate your own health



- .19% live in rural areas
- .81% live in urban areas

All participants to date. Recruitment is ongoing.



Participants who visit [Data Collection Sites](#) are asked to provide a research blood sample and urine sample. These samples are shipped from each Data Collection Site directly to Hamilton and stored in liquid nitrogen freezers at the CLSA's [Biorepository and Bioanalysis Centre](#) for future research. The centre has filled two freezers with more than 300,000 samples as of June 2013.

In July we will begin our maintaining contact interviews. These interviews are scheduled roughly a year and a half after your initial telephone interview or Data Collection Site visit. They will take place over the phone and will last approximately 35 minutes. We are conducting these interviews to keep in touch with you and to ask you some additional questions about your health and well-being. If you completed your telephone interview approximately 18 months ago, be on the lookout for mail from the CLSA this summer.

Across the country, we have held a number of events to showcase the CLSA, give back to our participants and to provide an opportunity for the public to learn about the study.

The CLSA hosted three Café Scientifiques in 2013. These events are funded by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). Videos and photos from past events are available on the [CLSA website](#).

- [Use it or lose it: Secrets of a healthy brain](#) was hosted by the Hamilton CLSA site in January.
- The Montreal CLSA site hosted [I'm not afraid of aging... But Let's Talk](#) in February.

- [The new science of everyday living for aging well](#) was hosted by the Victoria CLSA site in May.
- On October 16, 2013, the CLSA and CIHR will be co-hosting a Café Scientifique in Halifax. Details will be announced soon on the [CLSA website](#).



Ottawa Data Collection Site

- In June, the Ottawa CLSA site opened its doors to the community as part of [Doors Open Ottawa](#). Members of the public were invited to tour the Data Collection Site at Bruyère Continuing Care.

## CLSA Champions

“My name was just drawn and I thought, ‘What a wonderful thing to give to the next generation.’”

- Sally Tuckey, Victoria  
*Times Colonist*

“It’s a lovely study and I think we should really do everything we can to age gracefully...”

- Elaine Tolley, Nova Scotia  
*Metro News*



Moving? Heading south for the winter? Just a friendly reminder to let us know if your contact details change. Staying in touch with you is extremely important to us. If you have an email address, please let us know. Keeping in touch by email is a fraction of the cost of postage and helps us direct those resources towards CLSA research. You can provide us with this information by:

- Web: [www.clsa-elcv.ca/moving](http://www.clsa-elcv.ca/moving)
- Email: [info@clsa-elcv.ca](mailto:info@clsa-elcv.ca)
- Phone: 1-866-999-8303

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Did you complete a telephone interview? The CLSA cannot use any of the information you provided without your written consent. If you have not sent us your CLSA consent form, please sign one copy and return it to us using the paid-postage envelope provided. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact us.

The CLSA is grateful for support from the [Canadian Institutes of Health Research](#), the [Canada Foundation for Innovation](#), provincial funders and partners as well as affiliated universities and research institutes.